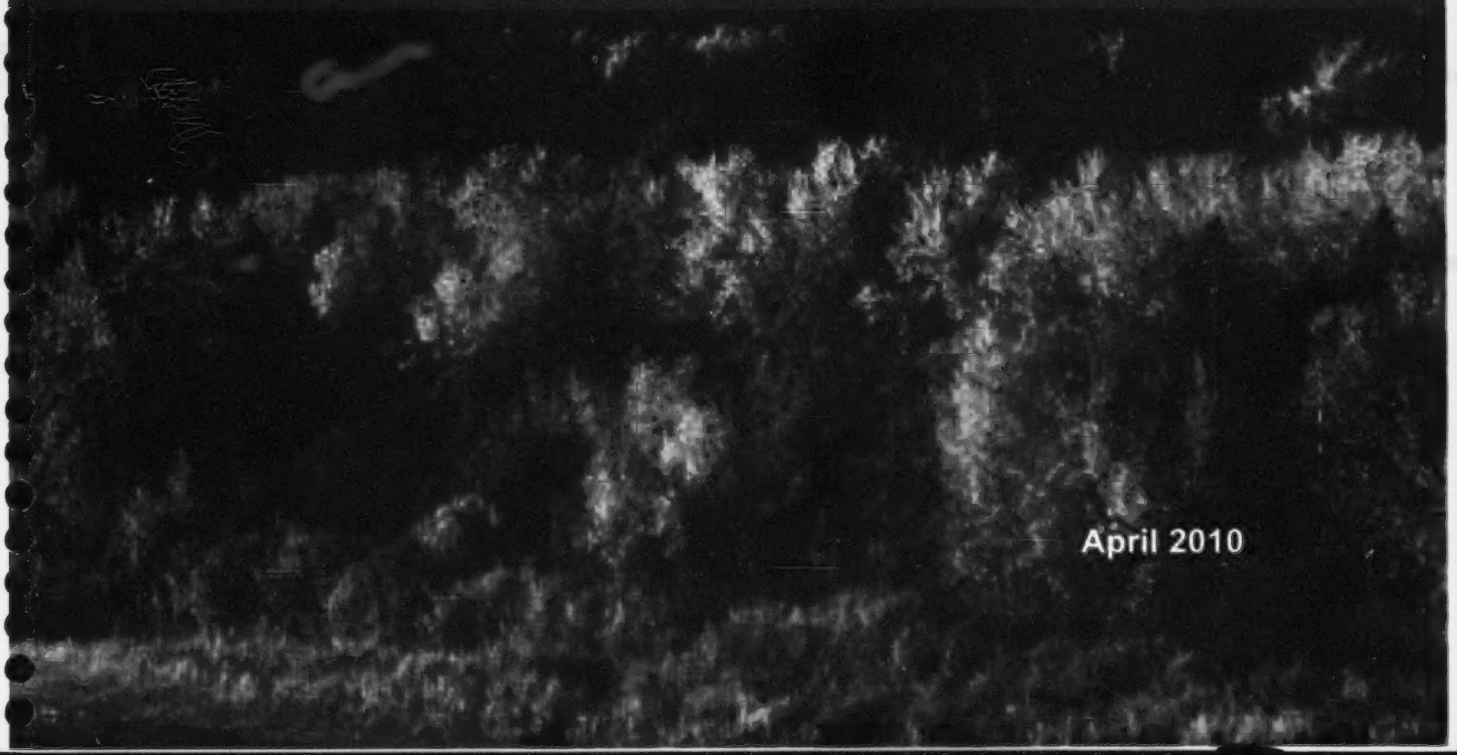
Government of Alberta

Housing and Urban Affairs

Community Involvement

A Guide and Tools for Developers



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INTRODUCTION

Background

Under Alberta's 10-year plan to end homelessness, Housing and Urban Affairs (HUA) has committed $100 million toward the development of housing for the homeless. Funding grants are being provided to local community-based organizations in seven Alberta communities.

HUA recognizes that community involvement is an important component of housing for homeless projects. Therefore HUA's Request for Proposals (RFP) stipulates that grant recipients are required to provide evidence of community involvement prior to disbursement of funds.

(Source: Schedule E, Housing for the Homeless 2009/2010 Request for Proposals Project Requirements)

Why is community involvement important?

All housing development projects may potentially raise community concerns. However, there are unique challenges when a housing for the homeless project is being considered:

- Addressing or alleviating community concern that a project would result in decreased property values, increased risk to neighbourhood safety and security, or concentration of low income housing ("ghetto-ization").
- Dealing with vocal special interest groups that are determined to stop the project.
- Engaging community members who are not vocal, but who may be a source of support, such as social housing clients.
- Addressing societal stigma about the client groups supported by the housing project.
- Averting media misrepresentation or misinformation about projects.
- Finding resources (i.e., staff, finances) to support community involvement activities.
- Finding guidance or tools to assist in the development of a community involvement process.
- Developing a plan for ongoing community involvement once the housing is constructed.

Although some opposition to a project targeting housing for the homeless can be expected, the likelihood of success is much higher when a sincere, open, transparent and responsive community involvement program is used to assist in decision-making in project planning, development and subsequent operation.

REFER TO **Appendix 1: Benefits of community involvement**

What is a community involvement program?

A community involvement program is a process in which community participation is solicited in order to improve major decisions or the consequences of decisions during the planning, development and operational stages of a housing project.

REFER TO **Appendix 2: Community involvement principles**
Appendix 3: Community involvement – some definitions

How do I develop a community involvement program?

This document provides guidance for the development of community involvement programs based on good practice and feedback from experienced developers. It has been developed to address the unique challenges of housing for homeless projects. The objectives are to:

- Describe roles and responsibilities for the development and implementation of a community involvement process.
- Outline a 6-step community involvement process.
- Describe community involvement activities within each of the 6 steps.
- Provide tools to assist in the execution of specific community involvement activities. These tools are included in the appendices.

Who is responsible for community involvement?

A successful community involvement process will identify early the person who will have responsibility for the design and implementation of the community involvement process. Typically, this is someone from within the developer's organization. However, some developers contract with outside consultants to manage all or part of their community involvement process. Regardless, this person is responsible to:

- Develop the terms of reference and strategy for community involvement—outlining the current situation, the decision(s) being made, and the community involvement process which will be followed.
- Implement the community involvement process. The process may include developing public information and notices, scheduling, resourcing and organizing community meetings, meetings with the media, writing summaries or reports, and developing Good Neighbour Agreements.

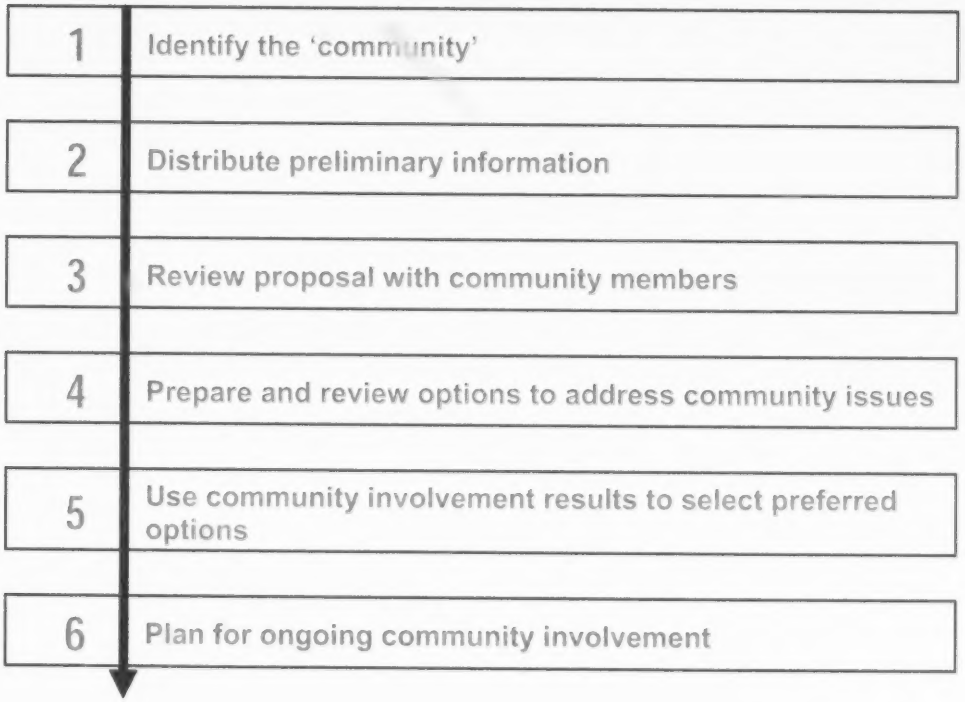
The amount of time required in this role will vary according to the scale and scope of the project. Smaller projects may require only a few hours per week during planning and construction stages, while larger or contentious projects may require one or more days per week.

The personal skills and knowledge of developers is critical to the success of creating effective community involvement and building a trusting relationship with the community over the long term. Consistency, clear communication and continuity during the community involvement process will be important. The development or community involvement coordinator will be the best person to define how the community is likely to respond to different involvement methods.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROCESS STEPS

An effective community involvement process for a homeless housing project involves 6 major steps (see below). Each step is described in detail in this section.

Community Involvement Process Steps



Step 1 Identify the 'community'

The purpose of this step is to develop a community contact list and a plan for involving the community. Each project will have a unique community context which needs to be identified through a situation analysis. This analysis is then incorporated into a terms of reference and community involvement strategy.

Appendix 4: Planning your community involvement program REFER TO

Understand the requirements of your local municipality

An important driver of your community involvement planning will be the requirements of municipal bylaws and policies that direct development in a neighbourhood (i.e. municipal land use bylaw, zoning bylaw, municipal plans). The development authority is usually represented by a Development Officer who is legally appointed to exercise development powers and duties on behalf of a municipality. The development authority seeks to determine the following:

a) Whether the proposed development interferes with the amenities of the neighbourhood or materially interferes with or affects the use, enjoyment or value of neighbouring properties; and

b) The compatibility and impact of the proposed development with respect to adjacent development and the neighbourhood where that development is proposed.

There are two major community involvement processes described by municipalities:

- **Review by municipal agencies:** Municipalities, through their land use bylaws, prescribe requirements for a review of a development application by municipal departments who are responsible for public safety, security and emergency response, transportation, utilities supply (power, water, natural gas, telephone, cable), park space and recreation programming, and public health. As well, most municipalities recommend that the development approval application be sent to the applicable Ward Councilor for their information.
- **Review by community associations and adjacent neighbours**: The municipality provides all development permit applications to community associations for their comments or questions.

In Alberta, the opinions of neighbours (adjacent property owners) are an important consideration in development permit review. Developers will be expected to account for the comments provided by the community through the involvement program and how they were or will be addressed during design, development and operation. The municipal authority makes the decision on whether or not the development will be granted a permit.

"Neighbours" are typically defined by a specific distance from the boundary of the property described in the development permit application. Municipal Development Officers have the discretion to increase the boundaries for adjacent property owners if warranted by the potential or perceived impact of a housing development proposal.

The process for submitting and reviewing a development permit application is consistent across Alberta as a requirement of the Municipal Government Act.

Appendix 5: Development approval process REFER TO

Assess community interest and support early

Talk to municipal planners about special interest groups and other groups that have shown an interest in development in the area. Conduct a community scan to identify history with development projects and potential community interest or concern.

Identify all stakeholders

Build a list of groups or interests to contact such as the community leagues, neighbourhood watch, cultural associations, groups or organizations representing new Canadians, and Business Revitalization Zone representatives. Proactively engage a wider section of the community who support the project.

Keep elected officials informed

Municipal councillors and MLAs may be an important source of support for your housing project. Keep elected officials informed throughout the project and be available to answer questions or provide information to them.

Step 2 Distribute preliminary information

At the proposal stage, send out preliminary information about the proposed project to everyone on your contact list. The purpose of this step is to alert the community of your intentions and determine if there are any significant barriers to project completion. Use the following general guidelines when preparing this information:

- Describe the project briefly, including a project timeline. Indicate or describe your current position on the timeline (e.g., an application has been made and the developer is waiting for funding).
- Be clear, succinct and provide pictures and diagrams if available.
- Avoid detailed description; community involvement will help define the project further.
- Avoid jargon whenever possible.
- Tell people how they can contact you (provide a contact name and number) to get more information or be involved in reviewing and commenting on the project.

Remember to allow for review and production time in the preparation of any materials that will be distributed.

Step 3 Review proposal with community members

Once funding has been confirmed, organize and coordinate face-to-face meetings with community members. The purpose of these meetings is to present the proposal and obtain community concerns, needs, perceptions, insights, areas requiring resolution, and potential solutions.

REFER TO **Appendix 6 for a description of various meeting formats and tips for organizing meetings**

Face-to-face meetings* can include:

- Personal interviews with key community members and stakeholders
- "Kitchen table" meetings (informal meetings with interested groups)
- Open houses
- Workshops
- Advisory committee
- Focus groups/group interviews

* Other techniques to obtain community concerns, needs, perceptions, insights, and solutions may include written surveys and telephone contact.

The questions commonly asked by the facilitator during meetings include:

- Is the project accurately and completely described?
- How do you think the proposal could be improved?
- Are there other needs or issues we should be aware of?
- Do you have concerns with planned support services?
- Which needs or issues do you think are most important?
- What solutions do you have for addressing your needs and/or concerns?

Develop a list of critical issues for the project that must be addressed by potential solutions.

Step 4 Prepare and review options to address community issues

The purpose of this step is to involve the community in the development of options to address issues. In this step, the proponent will prepare options or solutions that incorporate what has been heard during the community involvement program activities in Step 3.

Then the proponent will review project options with community members, providing opportunities to clarify and expand the options. Usually, workshop discussion groups of 8 to 12 people work best for this kind of review. An open house with illustrations of the issues and options is a good idea, when supported by a

response and data collection format (e.g. survey, active note-taking and reporting after the event). It is very important to have a skilled facilitator present for this meeting.

Encourage participants to submit their recommendations in writing or agree to have meeting notes kept as a reference for use in examining and evaluating options.

The questions commonly asked by the facilitator during these meetings include:

- Are the options or solutions accurately and completely described?
- How well do the options address critical issues?
- Are there other options we should consider?
- Do you foresee any problems that could occur if we proceed with any of these options/solutions?

Community participants may be interested in seeing a written summary from these meetings. Therefore, a plan for distribution of meeting notes is recommended.

Potential role of experts

An expert, who is respected by all parties, can help provide comments on a range of options and provide views on how well they believe each of the proposed options perform. Remember that an "expert" should not have a stake in the outcome.

Step 5 Use community involvement results to select preferred options

The purpose of this step is to select the best possible options or solutions for project design and development. The proponent will review the community involvement results from Steps 3 and 4 to answer the following questions:

- Which option or solution best addresses the critical issues identified by the community?
- If critical issues cannot be addressed, why not?
- What could go wrong if a particular solution is selected? Are there contingencies for any risks?
- How, specifically, should the selected solution or option be implemented (this consideration often leads to a need for specific text in the appropriate format: e.g. a business or work plan. It also leads to a need to clarify specific implementation roles and responsibilities)?
- What direction and resources will the people responsible for implementing the chosen option require and how long do they have to do it?
- How should the results be monitored, measured and reported to the community?
- What further information or involvement should community members and other stakeholders have?

Ideally, the developer organization would inform community participants of decisions and offer community members a final opportunity to indicate whether any major factor has been overlooked or misunderstood. Usually this confirmation can be done through telephone, electronic mail or surface mail. However, in some

cases, a meeting may be required. If people take the time to respond, then ensure their request is actively considered.

Communicating the developer's project decision

The Municipal Development authority requires that data collected from the community be summarized and presented in a format that relates to the decision being taken (i.e. a municipal development permit approval). This will allow the Development Officer to quickly and easily determine if the community involvement requirements under the municipality's land use bylaw have been met.

Along with those in the community who have been actively involved, there may be others who because of their interest in the project or a land use bylaw requirement should have the opportunity to be informed of the outcomes of a specific decision process and the role that community involvement played in selecting a specific option. Consequently, communication of the outcomes to a broader audience may be important. A communications strategy may be required to ensure that other people involved with the decision or its implementation have the opportunity to be informed.

REFER TO **Appendix 7 for some methods for communication, awareness and learning**

Step 6 Plan for ongoing community involvement

Good practice by any developer is to demonstrate that there will be ongoing community involvement and monitoring of a housing project once it's operating. This can be supported through a *Good Neighbour Agreement*. This is an agreement the developer prepares with participation by the community. It identifies long-term community needs and how they will be addressed once the facility is operating.

REFER TO **Appendix 7 for a description of a Good Neighbour Agreement**

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APPENDIX 1

Benefits of community involvement

Community involvement takes an investment of time, energy and effort. There has to be benefit derived from such an investment. Housing developers and service delivery agencies have the best of intentions and often run up against significant concern from community representatives who, in some cases, believe the development should not proceed because of the consequence(s). The following list provides some of the benefits of community involvement that developers should keep in mind as motivators as they advance their projects:

Ensures the developer's or agency's corporate commitment to community involvement is understood and met. **Most of the developers and agencies contacted during the preparation of this guide indicated their strong commitment to ensuring a long-term, positive relationship with the communities in which they operate. They said they were committed to doing "more than the minimum" as they began their community involvement efforts to ensure that the community and neighbourhood perspectives were brought to bear in project decision-making. This reinforces the developer's or agency's positive reputation in the community.**

Meets the municipal development permit application requirements. **This is a practical benefit to all developers. Because of the nature of the development proposals for housing for the homeless, most community and neighbourhood residents are sympathetic to the idea but at the same time are concerned about the consequences of the construction of this kind of housing development in their neighbourhood. Both municipal development authorities and concerned members of the community will pay close attention to the development permit application and approval requirements to ensure that "the letter of the law" is met. It will be very important for a developer to demonstrate that they meet the community involvement requirement through a well planned, designed, delivered and reported process and program.**

Reinforces the developer's or agency's continuing interest in being a good neighbour by contacting community and neighbourhood leaders to provide project information and community involvement opportunities for the purpose of building trust and good long-term working relationships. **Developers who provide housing for the homeless and service delivery agencies that support the residents in the completed development have been in their communities for, in most cases, decades. They are well known in their community and are interested in making sure that the neighbourhood is a better place as a result of their developments and programs. Starting the community involvement process as early as possible based on a well considered plan reinforces that the project owner is a caring and concerned community member.**

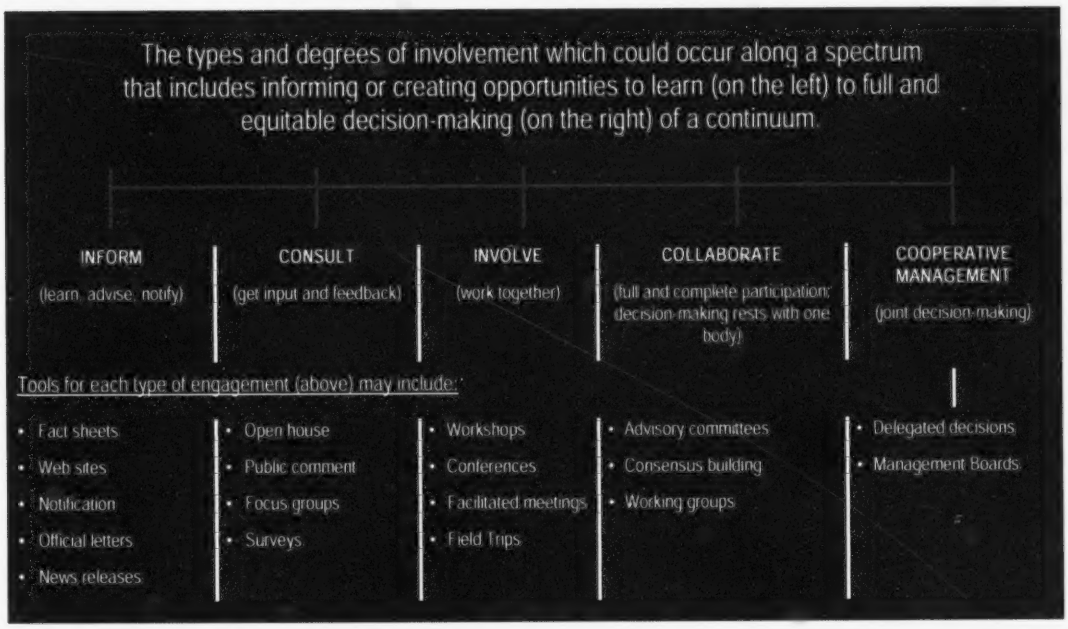
Early identification of community issues and needs for that must be addressed during the development application process and accounted for during construction and subsequent operation and management of the housing project. **Engaging community leaders and members early will assist the developer and /or service delivery agency in identifying what elements of the development plan might be of interest or concern to the community and will need to be addressed in the development permit application.**

Opportunity to gain the benefit of community comment and support for a better project. Because of the nature of the housing development proposal, it will be held to a high standard for construction and operation. Early concern is often based on a lack of information or misunderstanding about the development, its intent, ultimate use and management. Through a well planned and designed community involvement program comments can be received positively and addressed constructively to ensure that the project is well defined for both the community, the developer and the service delivery agency that will be responsible for management and operation, minimizing misunderstanding and reinforcing the opportunities that the development will provide to the community.

Allows for a source to provide consistent information. When community interests and various stakeholders are aware a developer and/or service delivery agency has a coordinated, planned and managed community involvement program with a consistent contact for information, that source will become the place where information is sought. By anticipating some of the needs for municipal and project decision-making, credible, accurate and timely information can be provided to allow community involvement to be open, transparent and constructive.

The figure below illustrates a continuum for community engagement as an approach to decision-making for consideration in the context of proposals for the development of social housing.

Figure: Continuum for Community Engagement


The types and degrees of involvement which could occur along a spectrum that includes informing or creating opportunities to learn (on the left) to full and equitable decision-making (on the right) of a continuum.
INFORM
(learn, advise, notify)
CONSULT
(get input and feedback)
INVOLVE
(work together)
COLLABORATE
(full and complete participation; decision-making rests with one body)
COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT
(joint decision-making)
Tools for each type of engagement (above) may include:
• Fact sheets
• Web sites
• Notification
• Official letters
• News releases
• Open house
• Public comment
• Focus groups
• Surveys
• Workshops
• Conferences
• Facilitated meetings
• Field Trips
• Advisory committees
• Consensus building
• Working groups
• Delegated decisions
• Management Boards

APPENDIX 2

Community involvement principles

A successful community involvement program is supported by principles that guide the process and demonstrate ethical behavior.

A list of common community involvement principles include:

Respectful: We will form relationships based on a foundation of trust, honesty and cooperation. *The integrity of the municipal planning process and all its requirements will be honoured.*

Inclusive: We will provide an opportunity for people to be meaningfully involved in matters that affect them. *Information will be shared freely. Meaningful solutions for both stakeholders and decision leaders will be provided.*

Timely: We will provide people the opportunity to be involved early in the decision-making process and give a reasonable period of time for their participation. *Commitments made during the public consultation process will be delivered in a timely manner.*

Responsive: We will provide people access to the results of the community involvement process. *Decisions will be based on previous and ongoing commitments and legal requirements, data collected from the community and stakeholders along with technical and financial feasibility.*

Transparent: We will define and communicate our respective roles and responsibilities in the community involvement process. *The public consultation process will be open and transparent.*

Flexible: We will adapt the community involvement process to meet people's needs. *Design of the process and program will be sensitive to the needs of participants. The process will be flexible to accommodate unexpected developments.*

APPENDIX 3

Community involvement – some definitions

The following definitions have been provided for consistent interpretation and application of the community involvement policy and guide:

Community: A grouping of stakeholders who share their situational relationship to a decision; the identification of communities assists in recommending who should be consulted on a specific decision. No assumption can be made that people within a community share the same priorities or expectations regarding the decision being considered.

Community involvement: Communicating with and involving communities in order to improve a decision or its consequences. It is intended to create "shared ownership" of a decision and the opportunity to support it. Community involvement includes identified opportunities for mutual exploration of needs, options and consequences in order to help choose the best available options.

Community liaison: The person who provides "one window" entry into the involvement process. They reach out to stakeholder communities to encourage their participation in the community involvement process. They place high emphasis on responding accurately and informatively to participants' questions based on the participants' needs.

Coordinator: The person who ensures there is a plan and that timely preparations are made and all public communications and involvement opportunities are delivered according to the plan.

Decision: A choice among options; a choice made in an effort to improve.

Decision involvement: A commitment to integrate people's concerns into the final decisions, while attempting to build agreement about desirable outcomes. The organization responsible for the decision decides which option to select and how to proceed.

Decision leader: A leader who is accountable for the project and who acts to ensure that those communities and stakeholders affected by a decision are informed of both the decision process and the results.

Engagement: A continuum of involvement that describes the type and degree of engagement which could occur in a progressive range that goes from informing, to full collaboration and co-operative resource management with shared decision-making, investment and risk.

Facilitator: Someone who organizes and facilitates meetings. A facilitator guides the discussion in an organized, but neutral manner. The facilitator designs discussion methods and agenda, but does not contribute to the discussion. The facilitator models active listening behaviours, gathering, recording and reporting ideas that have been generated from the meeting.

Stakeholder: Someone who is directly affected by a decision and is concerned over the consequences of a decision. Stakeholders are often not well informed about the technical factors affecting a decision, but may have excellent information about the community that must be considered in decision-making (i.e. local needs and expectations).

APPENDIX 4

Planning your community involvement program:

- Situation analysis
- Community involvement terms of reference
- Community involvement strategy outline

Planning community involvement: situation analysis

TITLE *Name of the project or plan* _____

ISSUES
Describe why it is necessary to do this analysis at this time. What tells you that these issues are urgent and/or important?

_____

_____

_____

_____

WHO ARE "THE PUBLIC?" *Describe the public or community interests that should be involved*

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

ESTIMATED TOTAL NUMBERS - PARTICIPATION TARGET _____
Number of people you'll actually hear from

HOW AND WHEN DO PEOPLE WANT TO BE INVOLVED?
Ask some representatives of each "interest" about how they would like to participate. Are they interested in detailed reviews or do they want a brief opportunity? How much time do they want to allocate?

_____

_____

_____

_____

WHAT ARE THE PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS AND/OR CONCERNS?
Ask representatives of each "interest" what they think about the "issues" described above. Do they have other issues?

_____ _____

_____

_____

_____

Situation analysis - continued

CONTEXT

What are the limitations that all participants must know? (legislation, regulations, budget, time lines, resource characteristics, interdepartmental relations)

MEDIA RELATIONS

Are media representatives interested? Which media? How can you help the media report the story accurately?

ELECTED OFFICIALS *Describe which elected officials have an interest. How and when will they be kept informed?*

PREFERRED TECHNIQUES (TO MEET OBJECTIVES)

Describe how you would like to involve each "interest." Do you need meetings? What kind?

HOW WILL INFORMATION FROM PARTICIPANTS BE USED?

Describe how you will use the public response data. What format will the information take? How will participants know you have heard them?

Planning community involvement: terms of reference

NEED FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT *Why is it desirable; how will it be helpful?*

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT OBJECTIVES
Intended outcomes? Write them to be specific, measureable, realistic achievable and time defined.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PRINCIPLES *Guiding statements that reinforce how the best possible decisions will be made.*

SCOPE OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT *Broadly, who should be included?*

USE OF RESULTS FROM COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Planning community involvement: strategy outline

OBJECTIVES *To have how many participants? To resolve what?*

TARGET AUDIENCES (IN PRIORITY) *List the "interests" that you wish to involve, in order of priority.*

INITIAL CONTACT WITH "COMMUNITIES"
Describe how you will learn participant needs.

Target Dates

INFORMATION OUT (FORMAT[s]) *Describe how you will send information out: newsletter, direct mail, letter of information, web site, e-mail, etc.*

Target Dates

MEETING/REVIEW OPPORTUNITIES *Describe what kind of opportunities the "communities of interest" will have to inform you of needs and to review options.*

Target Dates

Strategy outline - continued

MEDIA RELATIONS *Describe how you will communicate with media representatives.*

	Target Dates

MONITORING AND EVALUATION
Describe how you will track participation numbers, and the satisfaction of participants with the process and outcomes.

OTHER COMMUNITY RELATIONS ACTIVITIES *What else do you do to maintain a positive community profile?*

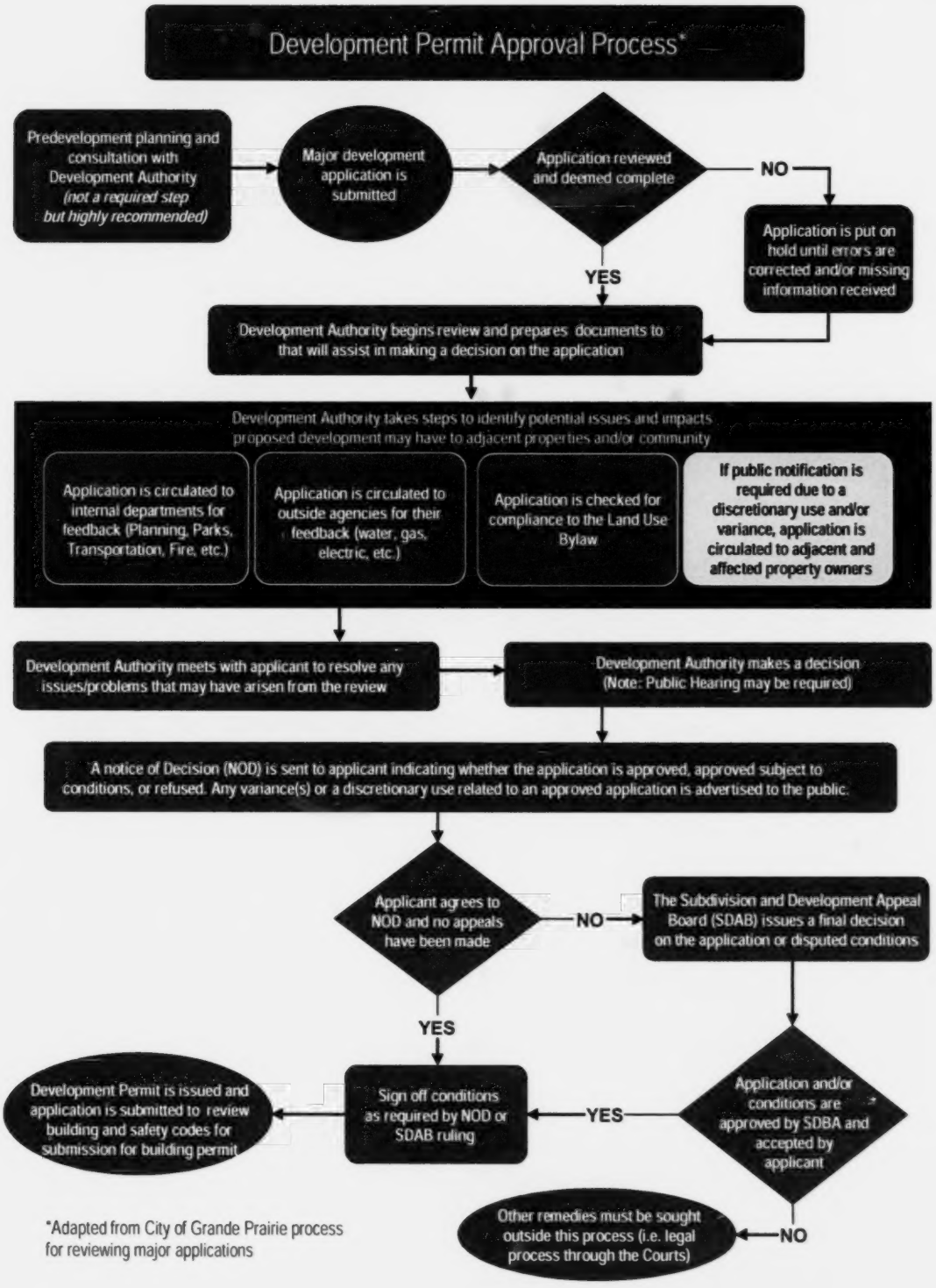
TRAINING/STAFF PREPARATION *How will you prepare employees /other "partners" for their roles in the process?*

DECISION *Who will decide upon the outcome? When?*

FOLLOW UP *What will you do after community involvement to ensure that everyone's issues have been accounted for?*

APPENDIX 5

Development approval process


Development Permit Approval Process*
Predevelopment planning and consultation with Development Authority (not a required step but highly recommended)
Major development application is submitted
Application reviewed and deemed complete
NO
Application is put on hold until errors are corrected and/or missing information received
YES
Development Authority begins review and prepares documents to that will assist in making a decision on the application
Development Authority takes steps to identify potential issues and impacts proposed development may have to adjacent properties and/or community
Application is circulated to internal departments for feedback (Planning, Parks, Transportation, Fire, etc.)
Application is circulated to outside agencies for their feedback (water, gas, electric, etc.)
Application is checked for compliance to the Land Use Bylaw
If public notification is required due to a discretionary use and/or variance, application is circulated to adjacent and affected property owners
Development Authority meets with applicant to resolve any issues/problems that may have arisen from the review
Development Authority makes a decision (Note: Public Hearing may be required)
A notice of Decision (NOD) is sent to applicant indicating whether the application is approved, approved subject to conditions, or refused. Any variance(s) or a discretionary use related to an approved application is advertised to the public.
Applicant agrees to NOD and no appeals have been made
NO
The Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) issues a final decision on the application or disputed conditions
YES
Development Permit is issued and application is submitted to review building and safety codes for submission for building permit
Sign off conditions as required by NOD or SDAB ruling
YES
Application and/or conditions are approved by SDBA and accepted by applicant
NO
Other remedies must be sought outside this process (i.e. legal process through the Courts)

*Adapted from City of Grande Prairie process for reviewing major applications

APPENDIX 6

Managing meetings with the community

Section 1 Community involvement – meeting management tool box

Section 2 Community involvement – techniques and skills to assist in meeting management

Section 1: Community involvement – meeting management tool box

This 'tool box' is provided to help you choose the required "tools" to assist in planning, designing and delivering a community involvement program.

The personal skills and knowledge of developer and service agency representatives is critical to the success of creating effective community involvement and building a trusting relationship with the community over the long term. Consistency, clear communication and continuity during the community involvement process are critical. You, as the development or service delivery community involvement coordinator will be the best person to define how the community is likely to respond to different involvement techniques.

It is recognized at the outset that real events will not follow the clean guidelines provided, and that each facilitator and representative will make personal judgements that go beyond these guidelines. However, it is recommended that everyone associated with your development and /or service will work from a common model and make common assumptions about behaviours the will create success. This appendix is designed to provide reference information to help you develop a community involvement strategy to meet the developers, service agencies and the community's needs.

TOOL 1: Defining roles

TOOL 2: Meeting formats

TOOL 3: Overview of preparation requirements for public meetings

TOOL 4: Process checklists

TOOL 1: Defining roles

Two distinct and individual roles are critical to the process of community involvement. It is desirable that no one attempts to fill more than one of these roles at any given time.

Facilitator: The person responsible for the process, but not for decisions. They are:

- responsible for process
- no vested position
- never defends ideas or positions
- encourages input from all participants
- responsible for time management
- explains community involvement process
- explains how the community involvement results will be used in decision-making
- ensures meeting purpose is achieved
- records meeting outcomes and provides them to the project representative

Representative: The person(s) responsible for ensuring that information about the development and /or the service agency's needs, information and constraints is clearly and correctly presented. They are:

- a credible expert
- coordinates advance public information
- informs group about technical facts or realities
- explains ideas and relationships
- clarifies developer and /or service agency's role, needs, constraints (i.e., parameters and context)
- clear communicators and presenters
- not an advocate
- sources for and explanations of the decision-making-process
- sources for and explanations of legal and policy requirements
- distributors of meeting results

TOOL 2: Meeting formats

While meetings may not be required in every case, it is likely they will be the most commonly used method. Any meetings that are held should proceed on the principle that they are intended to build trust and familiarity among participants, and between the participants and the developer and /or the service delivery agency. Building communication and trust is as important as the establishment of concrete outcomes.

The format for a meeting is dependent upon the meeting purpose. The purpose is determined by establishing the following:

Objective: Is the meeting primarily to inform, to listen, or to discuss and gain consensus? This statement should reflect participants' needs, as well as the developers or service delivery agency.

Topic: What information will be the focus?

Community Representatives and Stakeholders: Who must be present?

Urgency: How soon must the result of the meeting be used and reported?

In addition to these concerns, you should consider how much formality is required. Generally, the greater the trust and familiarity of the participants, the less formality will be required. The types of meetings that can be used in a community involvement process are described below. The list begins with the least formal type of meeting and ends with the most formal.

Kitchen table meetings

Small meetings (less than 10 participants) which operate without a formal agenda. Usually these meetings consist of a brief presentation followed by a question, answer and discussion session. A facilitator can be helpful to maintain direction and efficiency by using questions to direct the discussion and clarify points. These meetings most closely resemble a "talk show" interview and the facilitator should have several questions in mind before initiating the meeting.

There is usually an emphasis on building trust and familiarity. This is enhanced by creating common reference points and the use of a casual setting (encourage local people to select an appropriate location).

"Kitchen table" meetings can work well as a format for "group interviews." In the "group interview" meeting be sure the range of community interests are represented among the people invited. These meetings are normally used when identifying or confirming needs, interests, concerns and issues and when it's helpful to speak and obtain information from selected members of the community.

Kitchen table meeting - advantages	Kitchen table meeting - disadvantages
▪ Builds trust and familiarity through direct contact ▪ Participants can speak frankly and respectfully ▪ Participants have an opportunity to comment ▪ Meeting leaders can obtain in-depth information in a short period	▪ A limited number of people can participate in any one meeting (i.e. may have to hold a series of meetings) ▪ Unless there is a good meeting leader/facilitator, one or a few people can dominate

Open house

An open house is used to present a complex range of information to a large group of participants and to gain an impression of their response to the information. Generally, open houses depend heavily upon displays to present information. The opportunity for discussion with informed representatives is also important to the process. The success of open houses is highly dependent upon the ability of the sponsors' representatives to engage participants in open conversation, and to help them understand the information being presented. It is highly desirable that each person entering the display area is welcomed and that their role is carefully explained. Usually, a written survey, questionnaire, response form or active recording of comments on flip charts is available to obtain attendees' opinions or advice.

This technique is normally used when it's important to collect information (i.e., community needs, interests and concerns), or provide the community with information or learning opportunities. Follow-up report of results to participants is required.

Open house - advantages	Open house - disadvantages
▪ Opportunity for representatives to speak "one-on-one" to interested community participants ▪ Provides an opportunity to give the community detailed information and learning opportunities on the need for planning, development and management decisions ▪ Allows developer or service delivery representatives to get a sense of participants' needs, interests and concerns and to address them through project decision-making ▪ Minimizes confrontation on issues that are perceived to be volatile ▪ Allows the developer or service delivery representatives to develop a list of interested people and to make personal contacts for follow-up or further involvement	▪ Does not allow public participants to share views or develop a consensus position ▪ Generally very expensive for the number of participants attending ▪ Results do not allow for in-depth analysis of issues or needs

Round table meetings

These are moderate-sized meetings (5 to 20) which include a formal agenda. These meetings are usually held to make a decision about some information presented to all attending. An independent (ideally) facilitator uses the agenda and formal control of the discussion to ensure the group achieves the outcome required. The facilitator must ensure that all in attendance agree with the purpose of the meeting, and must be skilled at ensuring everyone participates. Since decision-making rests with the entire group, it is also critical to have skills in creating group consensus and in defining decisions in a way that is meaningful to the group.

Normally used when community involvement in making decisions is required. The required meeting purpose and outcomes must be well defined at the outset and participants' roles made clear. Good technique in assessing appropriate management planning and development options and risks.

Round table meetings - advantages	Round table meeting - disadvantages
▪ Creates opportunities for learning by participants, project and service delivery leaders ▪ Allows for all participants to provide comments ▪ Allows participants to provide their priorities for needs, concerns and expectations ▪ Provides project or service delivery leaders with a sense of the community priorities in planning, development and management ▪ Provides an opportunity for participants to become more informed about the need for planning (information/learning) ▪ Can help to build trust	▪ Requires time to plan, organize and insure that an appropriate range of community and stakeholder interests are represented ▪ Requires the use of a skilled facilitator ▪ Without a skilled facilitator, a few participants may dominate

Workshops

The workshop is so named because everyone in attendance must "roll up their sleeves" and get involved with the information. Workshops, guided by a defined agenda and process with the support of an independent (ideally) facilitator, are established to allow participants with differing values and priorities to build a common understanding of the problems and opportunities confronting them. The intent is to learn about a proposal and to establish a common list of objectives and a range of alternatives that everyone agrees is sufficiently complete. In many cases, participants are able to agree upon priorities and create broadly acceptable alternatives. The facilitator must be skilled at encouraging discussion and participation and must not show any ownership or favouritism towards any alternatives discussed. The emphasis is upon establishing common ground and broad "ownership" of the alternatives before any attempt is made to set priorities or select a preferred alternative. Normally used when reviewing planning or development options and assessing risks related to those options.

Workshops - advantages	Workshops - disadvantages
▪ Creates opportunities for learning by participants, project and service delivery leaders ▪ Allows participants to provide advice on priorities for planning or development options ▪ Provides project decision makers with well defined criteria to use in selecting options ▪ Provides project or service delivery leaders with information that can be used to make decisions ▪ Allows participants to share perspectives and reach consensus	▪ An unbiased, independent facilitator is required ▪ Requires advance planning, clear definition of purpose and outcomes ▪ Requires credible "technical" presentations on background and criteria used to develop proposal alternatives ▪ Creates high expectations among participants that results will be implemented

Town hall meetings

This is a large (20 to 500) meeting with a formal agenda and highly formal presentations. The intent is to allow a large number of people to commonly witness cases for and against various alternatives. These meetings operate best when they are used simply to inform participants and not to create any decision or recommendation. If a decision is to be made, all participants must understand how that decision will be made.

Town hall meetings - advantage	Town hall meetings - disadvantages
▪ Provides information to a large number of people at the same time	▪ Usually provokes confrontation due to participants' need to provide information using a method that is not conducive to interaction ▪ Does not allow for the exchange of information or ideas (there is only one-way communication) ▪ No accountability for participants or opportunity to discuss and clarify with presenters ▪ Easily disrupted by "grandstanding" ▪ Does not allow participants or sponsors to share ideas and learn ▪ Potential to draw negative media attention

Advisory committees

An advisory committee is a group of people representing a range of community and stakeholder interests who are convened to provide advice to a community or public agency. Advisory committees can be standing committees that are intended to provide advice on a continuing basis or project committees that are struck for a specific term to provide advice based on community or stakeholder interests and needs to be used in a specific project decision. In order for an advisory committee to function successfully, agreement on terms of reference, specifying the scope and limits of operation of the group, is required. Advisory committees operate best when they are supported by an independent facilitator.

Advisory committees - advantages	Advisory committees – disadvantages
▪ Allows corporate or organization decision leaders to predictably and conveniently access people who, as informed community members, can provide information and advice to consider in policy and program decision-making ▪ Supported by a terms of reference that clearly define the scope and limits of the group ▪ Can be seen as a credible method that will demonstrate trust between the developer /agency over the long term ▪ Can be used as a vehicle to be a "neutral" sponsor for wider community outreach or events	▪ Requires an investment of staff time and a budget to support committee operation ▪ Expectations of some community or stakeholder interests may be inconsistent with the terms of reference; members may become frustrated when they realize that there is a difference between advisory and decision-making roles ▪ Familiarity with the development or services offered may turn the committee into "apologists" for the developer, agency or program, and the advice provided is not objective ▪ A sincere commitment to consider the advice provided by the committee is required from the developer or agency leaders at the highest levels of decision-making

Focus groups

A focus group consists of 8 to 12 people, led by a moderator in an in-depth discussion on one particular topic or concept. The goal of focus group research is to learn and understand what people have to say on a particular topic and why. The objective is to get participants talking at length and in detail about the subject they are focussing on. The intent is to find out how participants feel about a product, concept, idea or organization.

Focus groups - advantages	Focus groups - disadvantages
▪ Interaction among participants can stimulate new ideas and thoughts from within the group ▪ Participants are challenged by group pressure to keep their thinking realistic ▪ Developers can observe focus groups and gain first hand knowledge of public comments and views ▪ Focus groups can be executed more quickly than other forms of research ▪ Findings are easy to understand and are immediate	▪ There is a risk that the results might misinform; focus groups give a sense of understanding complex situations that might actually require more research ▪ Participants recruited to participate may not be representative of the "community" ▪ Dominating participants may influence other people in the group ▪ Moderator style may influence the results

TOOL 3: Overview of preparation requirements for public meetings

Be prepared - checklist of procedures

In order for community involvement meetings to succeed, a considerable amount of preparation and attention to detail is required. Tool 3 provides a quick reference overview of preparation requirements.

ACTION Notify/Prepare	RATIONALE	9 WEEKS	6 WEEKS	3 WEEKS	1 WEEK
Councillors, MLA, MP, government officials	These people can lend support to the community involvement process. A protocol requirement. An opportunity to create awareness.	Desirable advance notice (if attending meeting).	Acceptable advance notice.		Confirmation of attendance /needs.
MEDIA	Invite media support. Generate interest, and coverage.				
Booking ads and publicity		Confirm that advertising space is booked.		Contact local media and forward story material and ad copy (24 days prior).	Send final ad copy 10 days prior.
MEDIA Kit		Confirm that Media Kit will be available.	Send advance notification and kit to be received 4 weeks prior.		
Community and Business Leaders	These people offer critical support with logistics, contacts, local credibility and follow up.	Establish meeting time and leader's role (if any).		Confirm meeting date/location (mail out).	Confirm attendance (phone).
PUBLIC NOTICES	Supplement paid advertising and invite broad community involvement.	Request posters.	Have posters sent out 4 weeks prior.	Confirm that posters will go up (at least) 2 weeks prior.	
SUPPORT materials and recording/ presentation equipment	Advance preparation will support clarity and consistency.	Request artwork or graphic support.		Confirm presentation equipment. Have support materials in hand. If shipping, factor in time for transport.	Check equipment and inventory materials for presentation.
LOGISTICS	Participants and presenters need to be comfortable to create effective meetings.	Desirable advance booking for meeting and accommodation space.	On-site logistics, catering, vehicle rentals, accommodation (if required).	Minimum advance notice for any changes or additions.	

TOOL 4: Process checklists

Be prepared - checklist of procedures

In order for community involvement meetings to succeed, a considerable amount of preparation and attention to detail is required. Tool 4 provides checklists that outline the details requiring attention. They are intended as a reference to remind you of support materials, on-site activities, logistics, and media relations you may require.

Support materials

Should have "in hand" - 2 weeks prior
Allow 10 days, if shipping (suggest no shipping if possible)
(check applicable boxes)

- ❑ Overheads/overhead projector/spare lamp/screen
- ❑ Posters/video
- ❑ Flip charts/pens/writing paper
- ❑ Handouts
- ❑ Selection of previous materials/newsletters
- ❑ Display
- ❑ Tape recorder/recording sheets
- ❑ Agenda/correspondence/notes
- ❑ Storage arrangements N.B. - Proper shipping containers
- ❑ Name tags
- ❑ Prepared thank-you letters
- ❑ Participant registration forms
- ❑ Participant survey/questionnaire/response form
- ❑ Business cards
- ❑ Other: _____

On-site activities

(check applicable boxes)

- ❑ Contact representatives - office support
- ❑ Inspect/arrange meeting room
- ❑ Arrange suitable refreshments
- ❑ Arrange display location and set up
- ❑ Contact media representatives (if identified as part of the meeting plan)
- ❑ Arrange media location/special arrangements/interview area
- ❑ Set up and test audio and visual equipment (e.g. mikes) if needed
- ❑ Check for safety hazards/weather/grounds concerns
- ❑ Check bathrooms, service locations, noisy fans, lights/inside temperature
- ❑ Coat rack locations
- ❑ Set up tables and chairs and presentation location (e.g. projector)
- ❑ Put out previous print materials
- ❑ Councillor /MLA /other elected officials contact/arrangements
- ❑ Casual contact with community, cultural association and business leaders, etc.
- ❑ Contact municipal planning representatives and learn of perceptions/developments/needs/context
- ❑ Clean up
- ❑ Follow up
- ❑ Payment of bills/invoices
- ❑ Other: _____

Logistics

(check applicable boxes)

- ❑ Vehicle rentals
- ❑ Accommodation
- ❑ Room/hall arrangements
- ❑ Catering
- ❑ Travel arrangements for invited delegates/guests
- ❑ On-site vehicle support: bus, taxi, etc.
- ❑ Reserve projection/display equipment
- ❑ Other: _____

Recording arrangements

(check applicable boxes)

- ❑ Sign-in/attendance record
- ❑ Minimum of 2 observers/standard recording sheets
- ❑ Post meeting summary sessions
- ❑ Make final record
- ❑ Tape record entire session (optional)
- ❑ Distribute meeting record
  - Standard distribution to list of contacts
  - media representative
  - municipal planner(s)
  - local leaders
  - participants (kitchen table only)
- ❑ Participant survey/questionnaire/response form
- ❑ Other: _____

Media relations

(check applicable boxes)

- ❑ Ensure media kit is planned/assembled/ identify number of copies required
- ❑ Advance notification of intent and strategy (4 weeks)
- ❑ Place public notification ads (Hint: Ads run at least 2 times prior to the meeting)
- ❑ Advance story copy 10 days in advance (Hint: Try to get story to run one week ahead)
- ❑ Contact media upon arrival - be available for interviews, send media kit, verify needs and special arrangements
- ❑ Receive media representative and show seating area and power outlets
- ❑ Introduce media representative to developer /agency representatives, describe purpose and attendance (invite interview requests) (Hint: Do not draw undue attention to media)
- ❑ Give media story ASAP after meeting and/or before deadline - especially local interviews for impressions
- ❑ Follow up: next morning - anything you need?
- ❑ Refer media to others if request is made for additional contacts
- ❑ Ensure Developer /Agency media contacts are properly briefed and trained
- ❑ Other: _____

Follow up

(check applicable boxes)

- ❑ Municipal Councillors - contact offices/send formal record
- ❑ Applicable Member(s) of the Legislative Assembly – contact offices /send formal record
- ❑ Mail out meeting record and thank you to identified interests, for example:
  - municipal planning office
  - community association leaders
  - Team members /partners (e.g HUA representatives)
  - participants
  - others _____
- ❑ Developer /Agency information
  - meeting record
  - report any concerns or issues (verbal)
  - have someone clip any local follow up stories

Section 2: Community involvement – techniques and skills to assist in managing meetings

It is recognized that everyone will have their own approach, but it is valuable to have a common model of helpful techniques and skills. Following is a review of techniques and skills that can be utilized in the design and management of meetings with the community. Because meetings with community members can create a high level of stress for both organizers and participants, it is a good idea to be well planned and prepared; this keeps "surprises" to a minimum, and if they do emerge, proper preparation will allow you to deal with them more readily.

Techniques and Skills to Design and Manage Meetings with the Community

Action	Techniques and Skills to Use
A Establishing initial contacts	▪ Explain process and needs ▪ Informal contact ▪ Solicit and acknowledge comments ▪ Solicit needs and perceptions to help design meetings that might be required
B Pre-meeting contacts	▪ Ask for points of conflict or concern ▪ Ask for advice or help ▪ Be respectful ▪ Be relaxed and refreshed
C Determining roles and responsibilities	▪ Define roles ▪ Communicate frequently ▪ Follow up on requests quickly ▪ Ask for clarification if required
D Having an agenda/ clarity of purpose	▪ Provide a purpose ▪ Match agenda to meeting purpose ▪ Identify participants ▪ Have a schedule ▪ Describe how results will be reported and used
E Setting the tone for the meeting	▪ Be personal ▪ Greet each participant ▪ Welcome and introduce ▪ Thank people for attending ▪ Make positive statements about the meeting
F Keeping a record	▪ Have observers (one or two others) noting key points ▪ Note body language ▪ Consolidate notes immediately after the meeting ▪ Distribute the meeting notes
G Encouraging participation	▪ Actively solicit opinions ▪ Regularly check to ensure agreement with the process ▪ Welcome each contribution ▪ Clarify points when required
H Creating agreement and trust	▪ Check in with group to assess support ▪ Use active listening ▪ Use a flip chart, ensure points are recorded as stated ▪ Do not defend or favour ideas ▪ Use evaluation and priority setting methods

Action	Techniques and Skills to Use
I Resolving conflict	▪ Acknowledge and clarify differing points of view ▪ Restate points without emotion or defence ▪ Remain impartial ▪ Support self-esteem of participants ▪ Call a break and check in with the participants ▪ Ask for reasons for the position and restate as objectives
J Making presentations	▪ Be friendly and sincere ▪ Use clear language ▪ Make local references ▪ Be brief ▪ Be consistent from meeting to meeting
K Responding to questions	▪ Clarify or restate the question ▪ Be brief and direct ▪ Respond based on data
L Media relations	▪ Be friendly and sincere ▪ Use clear language ▪ Be brief and direct ▪ Respond based on data
M Summarizing	▪ Refer to written notes from the meeting ▪ State key points ▪ Ensure points are understood by participants ▪ Check for omissions ▪ Ask for group agreement/support
N Following through	▪ Review meeting notes, direct contacts and requests and establish commitments ▪ Note dates, complete tasks and follow up on commitments and keep a record of the results

A. Establishing initial contacts

In advance of the meeting, a range of community interests should be contacted to establish a basis for holding the meeting (i.e. Are the issues or related needs and concerns "critical?" Would a meeting help clarify some items? Do communities of interest need to provide advice or become involved?). It is most important that contacts are made in an informal and open manner and that they begin with an exploration of community perceptions and needs. The decision to hold a meeting should emerge naturally from the discussions and reflect the needs of both parties. In many cases, a number of local leaders (but not necessarily every one) should be contacted to ensure that an accurate and representative impression of local needs and perceptions is being gathered. It will be helpful to explain the overall process and expectations.

- Be prepared to explain the process and needs
- Open, informal contact
- Acknowledge leader's power and knowledge
- Solicit comments and acknowledge them
- Solicit needs and perceptions: ensure that meetings will address needs. Offer to listen

B. Pre-meeting contacts

- Be nosy but polite – ask questions
- Ask for help
- Give people attention
- Be respectful
- Be relaxed and refreshed
- Dress comfortably by your standards if you're meeting face-to-face; do not dress "down" because you think others might expect it

If you don't already have an understanding of the community, find out about current events and establish contact with key players who you think will be critical to the outcome of the meeting. Your first task is to reaffirm the importance of their attendance at the meeting. Your second task is to find out a little more about their perceptions of the issues being discussed. They may be able to help you identify points of conflict or concern that will arise in the meetings. At the very least, you will help to build trust and familiarity. Confirm the agenda with those who are attending the meeting.

C. Determining roles and responsibilities

In many cases several people will be involved in conducting the meeting. In these situations, it is important to ensure the roles and responsibilities of each person are clear. This prevents confusion or disorganization and will promote teamwork and mutual respect.

- Define roles, responsibilities, relationships and proposed "ground rules" (if required)
- Communicate frequently
- Follow-up requests quickly
- Clarify what is not clear

D. Having an agenda/clarity of purpose

Unfortunately, most people perceive that meetings are a waste of time. Ironically, most people also don't see an advantage to working with a meeting plan (agenda). You are working against these stereotypes. It is critical that the purpose of the meeting is clear. Have an agenda, even if it only consists of an estimate of the time required for the meeting and a list of the questions you intend to ask. In formal meetings, a written agenda should be available to participants and should be followed. Find out about participant time pressures, if needed, and be prepared to manage the time to ensure everyone has a chance to participate during the time allotted.

E. Setting the tone for the meeting

Be personal. Personal impressions are made within seven seconds of first contact. Try to demonstrate that you care and you're listening. It is important to make every effort to approach and greet people as they enter the meeting. Greeting should include a self-introduction and introduction of anyone else involved in conducting the meeting. It may be appropriate to solicit the person's name as they enter and make up a lapel tag or tent card to help identify them. However it's done create an impression of being a "good host."

- Approach, greeting, eye contact
- Welcome and introduction
- Look after the personal needs of the participant
- Use related humour/novel approaches to introductions
- Make positive statements about the meeting
- Thank people for attending

F. Keeping a record

- Assign observers to note key points and collaborate after the meeting
- Note body language: signs of conflict, buy-in
- Consolidate notes immediately after the meeting
- Do a meeting evaluation with participants
- Distribute notes to participants

Record-keeping of results from any community involvement process is critical. Acknowledge at the outset that a meeting record will be produced. If possible, try to have the meeting recorded by at least two observers. These observers can then collaborate with you after the meeting to verify observations and consolidate notes into a format based on the agenda. The record should indicate more than simply what was said. Observers should also note signs of conflict or lack of buy-in and signs of obvious agreement. Participants should be asked to evaluate the meeting, once it's completed; this can be done by simply asking each person what was "good" about the meeting or what needs to "improve" for future meetings. If the decision is related to a regulatory approval requirement, it will have to be documented and reported as part of the overall requirement for community involvement to satisfy the provincial or municipal approval agency that the "test" for community involvement has been met.

G. Encouraging participation

- Actively solicit opinions and comment
- Regularly check in with group to ensure agreement with the process
- Do not defend a position; welcome each new contribution
- Solicit input from quieter members
- Clarify points where required
- Keep a "visible" record, if possible (i.e. use a flip chart)

Each meeting will be conducted in a manner that welcomes participant involvement. This means the meeting leader/facilitator will always clearly explain the purpose and process. It also means the facilitator will regularly ask for suggestions and comments. The facilitator should ensure that everyone participates in the discussion. This may mean managing an outspoken participant and actively soliciting the involvement of a quieter one.

H. Creating agreement and trust

The meeting process should create a sense of agreement and trust among participants. This can be accomplished by the role of the meeting leader/facilitator and developer's representative(s) as "active listeners." It can also be accomplished by regularly checking in with the participants and ensuring information generated is sufficiently inclusive of everyone's points and that the points are accounted for. While making notes, it is important that the recording of each point reflects the words and position of the participant providing them. The use of a group memory (flip chart) assists this exercise. Similarly, it will often be important that any method to be used for evaluation or priority-setting is acceptable to the group and reflects democratic principles.

- Check in with group regularly to assess support for the meeting process
- Ask questions where message is not clear or incomplete
- Use active listening: reflect words back to participants
- Use a flip chart, or ensure points are obviously recorded as stated
- Do not defend or favour any ideas
- Use an evaluation and priority setting method that is understood and acceptable to the group

I. Resolving conflict

- Acknowledge differing points of view
- Clarify differing points of view
- Restate points of view without emotion or defence
- Remain impartial
- Support the self-esteem of the participants
- Call a break and personally check in with participants
- Agree to resolve conflict outside of meeting; mediate a resolution elsewhere
- Ask for reasons for a position; restate reasons as objectives

Conflict is an important part of decision-making. It should be viewed as healthy and constructive, but it should not be allowed to drag on unaddressed or it can destroy the energy and confidence of the group. The first step in conflict resolution is to acknowledge the differing opinions. The second step is to ask for clear statements of the participant interests and concerns. The facilitator can help by restating these positions to the group; this removes the emotional "sale" that is often connected to the point being made. An important concern throughout this process is the pride and comfort of the participants. It is also important to check the assumptions of the participants; many conflicts result from different assumptions, interpretation or need for more clarity.

J. Making presentations

Two things are critical in making presentations: clarity and brevity. Advance preparation is a key to effective presentations. After you have defined the point of the presentation, it is suggested you then define the present knowledge and the interest of the audience in this topic. Building from audience needs, construct a story line that relates new information you may be providing to the audience's needs and perceptions. Analogies and graphics are helpful. Since most messages relate through your body movements and the tone of your presentation, it is important to deliver a sincere message in a friendly and welcoming manner.

- Relax
- Be friendly and sincere
- Use simple language
- If using graphic support, use it properly
- Make local references, build common perceptions
- Be brief and stay on time
- Be consistent from meeting to meeting

K. Responding to questions

- Clarify or restate the question
- Use the language of the questioner
- Be brief and direct
- Respond based on the data
- Show empathy and knowledge when responding to "challenging questions"; indicate if action is being taken and what that action is
- If there is no answer, say so and indicate what follow-up and response will be provided

The most difficult aspect of responding to questions is ensuring you understand the question before answering. It is also important to avoid defensiveness or assertion in your answer. The ideal answer is direct, honest and brief. If the question is emotionally charged, demonstrate empathy and knowledge, and if you are aware of it or are in a position to implement it, indicate what action is being taken to address the situation.

L. Media relations

If there is interest from the media, you should be prepared to respond. A media strategy should be prepared as early as possible in the involvement process (see Appendix 7) if it is likely that the local media will have an interest. Assistance and advice should be sought from a media relations expert, if possible, in preparation of a media strategy.

If approached by a media representative and no media strategy has been developed, the following approach is recommended:

- Receive them warmly
- Answer any questions about the overall process and results; be factual
- Be polite and friendly but avoid defending any actions or motives related to the decision and involvement process or the results
- Offer to provide any of the "public" documentation that was released to participants or people who might be affected by the implementation of the decision
- Ask if there is any follow-up information or interview opportunities that may be helpful and make arrangements to have the appropriate project team members or decision leaders participate (**Note:** advice from someone experienced in media relations would be helpful.)

M. Summarizing

- Refer to the written notes from the meeting
- State key points
- Ensure group clearly understands points
- Identify any omissions that must be included
- Ask for group concurrence

When the meeting reaches a point of common agreement or understanding, it is helpful to summarize the progress made. This has two benefits: first, it confirms that you have the agreement and support of the group; second, it gives the group a feeling of progress and accomplishment. When summarizing, it is suggested that you ask the group for confirmation of your notes and observations. The observers may wish to add their comments to support or add to the summary.

N. Following through

After the meeting (or any other contact made during the involvement process), ensure you actually complete any task or information gathering you have offered to do for someone who contacted you, the project team,, the community or your staff or project colleagues. It is also advisable that you contact people, including those outside the organization as well as other colleagues that you worked with prior to the meeting, to find out their perceptions of the meeting.

Evaluate the community involvement process and provide the information to development or service delivery management team and to help develop a "library" of community involvement experiences to use when determining what will be helpful for a continuing community involvement program throughout the life of the housing project.

- Review meeting notes to establish commitments
- Immediately note commitments on calendar and respond by the date promised
- Complete any tasks committed, and inform those to whom the commitment was made
- Throughout the process, acknowledge participants' contributions and express thanks for their involvement

APPENDIX 7

Communication, awareness and learning tools

The exchange of information and messages between an organization and other organizations, groups, or people outside its formal structure are important to build support awareness, mutual learning, relationship building and cooperation is critical. There are likely a range of community and stakeholder interests including community associations, cultural associations, municipal, provincial and federal government representatives both elected and administrative who will have an interest in a development proposal.

The aim is to present a favorable image of your organization and the services offered to people who might be affected by the outcomes of development or service delivery decisions or those who can affect them. A variety of methods may be used for external communication, including face-to-face meetings, print or broadcast media, and electronic communication technologies such as the Internet. Advice or assistance from a public and community relations expert can help with planning, design and delivery of a focused program for communication, awareness and learning.

Media releases

Media releases can be a good way of getting an agency's message out to a potentially large audience through the electronic and print media. A media release should be timed to relate to an important or notable organization or agency "newsworthy" event or announcement. The news must be current, timely, provide human interest, have some prominence and be of consequence to the potential reader or listener. Media releases should be accurate, brief, clear and direct and without opinion or conclusion. Contact for more information must be provided and follow-up by media representatives encouraged. An overall media strategy should be considered in support of a developer or agency's communication, community awareness, and learning activities.

Media releases - advantages	Media releases - disadvantages
▪ Creates an opportunity to create awareness and learning among a large number of people in the community ▪ Can bring positive media attention to the development or services offered by an agency ▪ Creates an opportunity to have newsworthy activities disseminated into the community ▪ Can keep an agency in the news to help people learn about the services that are delivered and the role the developer or agency plays in supporting the community	▪ Requires a media coordinator dedicated to media relations, writing, production and distribution ▪ Need to maintain relationships with selected members of the media who focus on stories related to the proposed development or agency's service delivery in the community ▪ Over exposure could cause cynicism about the agency or developer

Newsletters

Newsletters are electronic or hard copy written updates on progress on a project. They can include highlights of ongoing and anticipated future developments or operations. They are often provided to the community on a regular, predictable basis as "updates". The timing can range from annually, to quarterly or monthly depending on the need to relay information and provide awareness to a target audience within the community. Newsletters can take the form of the traditional letter or they can carry an organization's "brand" and formatted similarly to a newspaper with graphics and photos to support the information included. The key element of a newsletter is the opportunity to for those who receive it to contact key decision makers within the sponsoring organization to get more information, make comments, ask questions, offer support or raise issues.

Newsletters - advantages	Newsletters - disadvantages
▪ Consistent way to regularly inform the community ▪ Once a format is developed it can be easily and consistently repeated ▪ Can be distributed through a contact list of interested people and provided at "point of sale" locations ▪ Helps to extend the organization or agency's "brand" into the community ▪ It's durable and can be passed on to others that might not normally receive it ▪ Can be used to keep staff informed as well as those outside the organization	▪ Requires an editor or coordinator dedicated to writing, production and distribution ▪ Need to maintain and update a contact list for distribution as well as establish and provide newsletters at drop off /"point of sale" locations

Field trips

Field trips are organized trips where participants visit physical sites. They can provide "real time" information about an operating program to participants and, if designed appropriately, provide opportunities for participant input. Community comment is possible when other participative activities are combined with the field trip. A popular technique for planning and design-related participation processes, field trips are especially useful as a complement to presentations, or when written reports are inappropriate. It's valuable to have a "program" that outlines the focus and items that will be presented and the timing for each aspect of the field trip.

Field trips provide people with an understanding about a place and/or practice that allows them to incorporate a new method into their practice, or to provide informed opinions on a proposal or issue.

Field trips - advantages	Field trips - disadvantages
▪ Can be used when the issue being considered has a building construction or program delivery focus. ▪ Helpful when a large number of community interests are involved in the process. ▪ Work well where participants require information or opportunities to learn first hand and these are best provided or explained on-site. ▪ Demonstration can be more effective than presentations. ▪ Adds transparency and learning to the process of participation. ▪ Provides opportunity for rapport with key community leaders or interests. ▪ Creates greater community knowledge of issues/processes.	▪ Costly if a large number of experts are engaged to present on site. ▪ A large number of participants require large number of staff/facilitators/ guides ▪ Number of participants is limited by logistics

Good neighbour agreements

What is it?

A Good Neighbour Agreement is a document that describes how the needs and concerns of neighbours will be addressed during operation of the housing project. Agreements can be formally negotiated, though remain voluntary and without legally binding language. The preparation of a Good Neighbour Agreement encourages accountability and cooperation while promoting good will, mutual understanding and learning.

How is a Good Neighbour Agreement developed?

Creating and implementing a Good Neighbour Agreement takes several steps and requires the commitment of a 'stakeholder group' made up of the service provider and community representatives, as well as other interested parties. A facilitator could be chosen to help support the process (this might be provided by the municipality).

Steps to developing a Good Neighbour Agreement:

1. Identify issues and solutions: The 'stakeholder group' meets to identify and confirm the operational needs or issues requiring resolution, and how each issue or need will be addressed.
2. Formulate the Agreement. The developer organization formulates the agreement.
3. Finalize the Agreement. The agreement is reviewed, revised and signed off by stakeholder groups.
4. Implement and review the Agreement: Agreements should be regularly evaluated and renewed (for example, on a yearly basis or as when agreed to as appropriate).

What are the components of a Good Neighbour Agreement?

The main components include:

A. Developer organization description

B. Housing project description

C. Neighbourhood relations program

D. Issue resolution process

E. Ongoing review of Good Neighbour Agreement

F. Signatures of stakeholder representatives

A template for a Good Neighbour Agreement is included on the next page. For an example of a Good Neighbour Agreement see

http://www.calgary.ca/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_0_780_237_0_43/http%3B/content.calgary.ca/CCA/City+Hall/Business+Units/Development+and+Building+Approvals+and+Land+Use+Planning+and+Policy/Land+Use+Planning/Current+Studies+and+Ongoing+Activities/Special+Care+Facilities/Good+Neighbour+Agreement+Initiative.htm

Good Neighbour Agreement

between

"Developer Organization"

and

"Community Association"

for

"Housing Project Name"

A. Developer organization description

- Mandate, goals, objectives
- Incorporation number
- Management structure
- Funding structure
- Client population
- Client services

B. Housing project description

- Purpose
- Clients (who they are and how chosen)
- Building location, size and composition
- Management (include both off-site and on-site staffing, training, policies and procedures)
- Property maintenance
- Parking
- Client rules and regulations (e.g. tenancy contracts)
- Land use bylaw regulations

C. Neighbourhood relations program

- Purpose and objectives
- Communication strategies (e.g. newsletters)
- Community events (e.g. open houses, BBQs, tours)
- Community participation (e.g. participate in crime prevention and community education programs)

D. Issue resolution process

- Resolution process steps
- Record of complaints and successes

E. Ongoing review of Good Neighbour Agreement

- Purpose
- Frequency
- Contact person

F. Signatures of stakeholder representatives

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